



Military Deployment

Coping with Separation

Periods of separation due to military deployment can be tough. Many become overwhelmed by the impacts of their spouse's absence. Although deployment presents challenges for you and your family, there are some positive things that can come out of this opportunity. What matters most is your attitude. Focusing on the negative aspects of deployment such as missing your spouse and having to take on all family responsibilities alone, can really bring you down. But your spouse's absence also gives you a chance to focus on you. Below are tips to help you take advantage of this time.

Get Busy!

Time passes quickly when you are active and involved in life. It also makes for better, longer and more interesting letters to your spouse. Find something you enjoy doing. Set goals for tomorrow, next week and next month. The completion of a project will give you a sense of satisfaction. Have you thought about:

- Going back to school?
- Taking up a new hobby?
- Pursuing an aerobic or weight program?
- Seeking part-time or full-time employment?
- Participating in Family Support Center or other base programs?
- Volunteering?

Handling stress while you're on your own

The following simple, common sense thoughts can help keep stress away or at least at manageable levels while your spouse is away from home:

- Take care of yourself.
- Get involved in things that make you happy.
- Avoid self-medication and abusing substances like drugs, alcohol, caffeine, nicotine and food. Liquor and drugs reduce the perception of stress, but don't reduce stress.
- Be flexible; accept that you can't control everything.
- Don't try to fix family and friends.
- Plan for stress. Set realistic goals that leave time for breaks and limit work. Take a stress reduction class.
- Learn how to praise yourself and accept praise. Turn off the "constant censure" voice that always says, "you should".
- Keep a sense of humor with you at all times.
- Start thinking about what you really want out of life and begin to work towards those goals.
- Take a mental health day every two or three months.
- Avoid sulking. Let people know what you want.
- Learn how to express irritation and appreciation to others.
- Pick out somebody you work with and tell them something about yourself that you haven't told anyone else.

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Adapted from Air Force Crossroads Predeployment Guide – a Tool for Coping

Are you suffering from the blues?

Most people find the dinner hour and Sunday afternoon the times when they miss their spouses the most. And everybody has an occasional blue Monday. But, if your blue days are increasing in frequency, pay attention to what is going on around you and within you. Are you:

- Letting things go?
- Gaining weight?
- Yelling at the kids?
- Constantly watching TV?
- Sleeping in late?
- Withdrawing from people?
- Dropping out of organizations?
- Spending a lot of time with your thoughts?
- Drinking more than usual or drinking alone?

Some use alcohol and drugs as a remedy. But that doesn't work. Drinking does nothing to answer life's problem. In fact, drinking just helps you to relax and forget--but the problems are still there. No one takes a giant leap into depression. It is more of a cumulative process. If your favorite words have become "I can't" you may want to talk to someone.

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healthy bodies
sound minds
a safe place to work

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